- Helps students feel accepted and valued as individuals
- Promotes greater self-esteem
- Increases personal responsibility in personal/social and academic, and career areas
- Develops better communication and inter-personal skills
- Results in greater overall satisfaction with the school experience
- Improves retention rates for schools
- Improves attendance for schools
- Results in better informed and trained faculty in regard to the students educational program
- Increases graduation rates resulting in reduced dropout rates
- Encourages students to attempt more rigorous coursework
- Increases parental involvement and support from family
- Increases communication between school and home
- Increases faculty ownership of student success
- Increases interaction with business and community
- Increases knowledge of graduation requirements for specific postsecondary goals
- Increases knowledge of college admissions, financial aid, and career opportunities
- Increases number of students attending postsecondary education/training
- Prepares students better for entering the competitive workforce in the global market

Advisor/Mentor Program Guidance

Kentucky students can certainly benefit from advising and mentoring programs, but a quality program in and of itself takes careful planning and time to develop and implement. Recent research suggests that poorly planned, or short-term, advising and mentoring can actually do more harm than good to our students, resulting in a more negative impact.

The Planning Team

It is highly suggested that a school designate a team of people to work on designing the advising and mentoring program. This team of people could include: classroom teachers, counselors, Family Resource/Youth Service Center staff, Community Education staff, administrators, parents and students. This collaboration creates ownership and investment in the program. It also ensures the program is not dependent on the leadership of one person or a small group of persons. The involvement of many stakeholders ensures the program will continue regardless of staff changes.

Once established, the team that is charged with designing the advising and mentoring program should review sound research and guidance documents such as those listed below. Program development should be methodical, and once the program is designed, it should be implemented with fidelity, adhering to the best practices of the research. This does not mean that a program should not ever undergo revision, but that those revisions should be very purposeful and should be made with the best interest of the students in mind.

- Resources for Establishing a Program: http://gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/merlin-cgi/p/downloadFile/d/20699/n/off/other/1/name/foundationspdf/

- Day One in the Life of a Program Coordinator:
http://nationalserviceresources.org/files/legacy/filemanager/download/learns/dayone_revised.pdf

The planning team should represent the school, students, parents and community. Since the advising/mentoring program is built around three separate domains (academic, career, and personal/social), it is important to involve membership from the community to focus on the areas of career development and personal/social growth. Initially, the planning team can have input into the design of the advisory program including those topics to be discussed in each grade level. Once the advisory program is implemented, the Advisory Council can meet periodically to discuss how well the program is functioning. If adjustments need to be made to better meet the needs of students, the Advisory Council can suggest changes to the program.

Questions to be considered should include the following:
- How will the members of the planning team be chosen?
- How long will members of the planning team serve?
- Will there be opportunities to add members to the planning team?
- Does the planning team represent all stakeholder groups?
- How often will the planning team meet?

The first step the planning team should take as it considers the actual content of the advising/mentoring program is to determine what the students in the school need. This can be achieved in many ways- an online or even a paper version survey given to teachers and students, student advisory groups and/or student government groups, etc. Once the needs are determined, the next step is to have the planning team prioritize those needs. Finally, the planning team would need to assess what resources already exist in the school setting and then determine what outside resources may be necessary to address them.

A review of school data is valuable in determining topics for the advisory program. Keep in mind that the advisory program should be organized around three domains: academic, personal/social, and career. Although there is abundant school data available on academic matters, there are also data on matters such as student discipline (behavior), attendance, retention and a category often referred to as opportunity gaps. Opportunity gaps are academic offerings such as honors classes or Advanced Placement courses where enrollment is limited. Students not permitted the "opportunity" to participate/enroll in these classes are denied the opportunity to succeed in challenging learning opportunities.

The chart below contains examples of various data to be used in determining topics for the advisory program. An examination of these data can also be helpful in determining goals for school improvement.

Test Scores	Enrollment	Graduation Rate
• Norm Referenced • Criterion Referenced	• Honors/AP Classes • College Path • Special Education	• By Gender • By Ethnicity • By SES
Attendance	**Discipline**	**GPA/Class Rank**
• Absences • Tardies • By Grade Level	• By Classroom • Types of Problems • Gender	• By Gender • By Ethnicity • By SES
Retention Rates	**Special Education**	**Dropout Rate**
• By Subject Area • By Grade Level • By Gender • Ethnicity	• By Gender • By Ethnicity • By SES	• Grade Levels • Gender, Ethnicity, etc. • Reasons Why

Once data has been disaggregated and analyzed to determine topics and directions for the advisory program, it may be helpful to make connections to the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). A chart with examples is provided below.

Disaggregated Data	Relationship to CSIP	Planning Team Outcomes
Discipline referrals are coming primarily from three classrooms	CSIP Goal: The school will implement measures to ensure a safe learning environment	Professional Development on effective classroom management will be provided to the three classrooms
Only 10% of African-American students are enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, while African American students comprise 35% of the school population	CSIP Goal: The school will provide an equitable learning environment where all students have access to high-level learning opportunities	Provide academic information to all students to strongly encourage enrolment in Advance Placement courses. Provide additional academic supports to any student wanting to enrol in Advanced Placement courses
Attendance rate has decreased steadily over the last three years.	CSIP Goal: Increase attendance rate to 96%	School counselors will implement a program to increase attendance. Technology will be purchased to immediately inform parents when absences occur.

Staffing

Staffing is an important issue that the team will need to take into consideration. Any caring adult in the school setting, as well as screened (background check) and trained community volunteers can easily and effectively serve as mentors and advisors. A school policy will need to be crafted and approved in order to utilize classified and volunteer staffing, but research confirms that this is a very effective route to increase the number of caring adults who have a vested interest in the well-being of students.

It will be necessary to talk to any and all stakeholders about the purpose of the advising/mentoring program and explain how these programs can help the school more effectively address the needs of the students and help them achieve greater personal and academic success. The planning team will want to examine all aspects of the program in pre-planning stages and share their plan for the program with stakeholders for input. People generally take a greater role in programs they have been able to provide input to, especially if they feel that their ideas and concerns were addressed.

There are some programs in the state that have helped schools and districts establish advising and mentoring programs, sometimes with the full school, or at least with the most identified students. Consider college coaches (upper-class college students) AmeriCorps, KY Scholars Program, E-mentoring such as with GEAR-UP and EKU, etc.

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) employs regional outreach counselors that live and work in 13 regions across the state. Outreach counselors are available, at no charge, to provide interactive workshops on a variety of college-planning, student financial aid, college admissions and financial literacy topics. Presentations are aligned with KDE's Core Content for Assessment of Practical Living/Vocational Studies. Visit the *Counselors, Community Partners and College Access Providers* section of www.kheaa.com for contact information and presentation descriptions.

In the design and implementation of a successful mentoring/advisory program, there are questions to be answered and issues to be discussed. The list below contains some programmatic questions included in prior sections. It is important to include input from as many stakeholders as possible to encourage ownership of the advisory program. In addition to the issues contained in various sections of this document, each school is unique and will have its own needs to address.

Advisory Program Components	Decisions/Issues to be Discussed
Advisor/Student Ratio	
Who will be advisors? How will they be chosen?	
Which students will be placed with advisors? Should students be allowed to choose? Do advisors keep students for one year, or as long as they are in the school?	
Will advisors be evaluated? What happens if	

advisors are not effective? Will students have a "voice" in determining how effective their advisors are?	
How often will advising occur? How long? When will advising occur? Where will advising occur? Will classified staff be advisors or just certified?	
Professional Development Needs: Curriculum/ Topics; Mentoring/Counseling Skills; Working with Parents; Expectations/Outcomes; Referrals	

Tips for Implementing a Mentoring/ Advising Program

- Start advising time with a smile and enthusiasm.
- Allow group time to discuss problems or concerns.
- Always have a purpose.
- Keep expectations realistic.
- Focus on why we are here.
- Get to know students as individuals.
- Allow students to know each other.
- Talk individually with students whenever possible.
- Learn and use names of students as you talk with them.
- Provide time for students to get to know each other.
- Be firm but understanding.
- Show genuine interest and students will respond!
- Follow a planned agenda or activities.
- Advising group is never a "Study Hall."
- Keep an open mind toward the program and be flexible with your students.
- Don't be slack on discipline just because it is advising time.
- Insist that all students follow school rules and any rules which the group has made.
- Know where to go for answers. You will not have all the answers. Refer! Refer! Refer!
- Avoid sarcasm. Be sensitive in choosing your words.
- Develop a feeling of togetherness and group cohesiveness.
- Remember, it takes time to make the program successful.
- Evaluate regularly.
- Practice 10-minute rules (i.e. late arrivals nor early leavers)

The planning team may also want to take the following information into account as it plans the program, and as it communicates with all stakeholders regarding the program.

Seven Reasons Why Teachers Resist Advisory Programs

1. Parents do not understand the concept and many may oppose it.
2. Many administrators are not really concerned about it.
3. Most teachers have had little formal preparation for service as an advisor.
4. Teachers do not understand the goals of the endeavor.
5. Advisory takes time – time that many teachers believe could be invested more effectively in preparing to teach their subject(s).
6. Some teachers do not want to engage in a program that requires personal sharing.
7. When it is implemented incorrectly and with little staff development and leadership, students do not provide positive feedback. (Van Hoose, 1991, pp.2-3).

The Tool for Advising Students for Success

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

A student ILP is an online college and career planning tool to help students plan his or her coursework and activities as they prepare for post-secondary education and develop his or her career. The ILP is designed to help students work together to develop an education plan that meets the needs of each student and ensures that they can achieve their goals.

Schools that embed the ILP into the advising system established within the school will see students meeting their goals, teachers building relationships with students and schools meeting the needs of all students.

The ILP provides students with many resources that will improve the educational and developmental needs of students. It also provides information to school administrators and teachers that will help them meet the needs of their students.

What can students do with his or her ILP?
They can:
- Save Career Matchmaker Results
- Keep notes on the careers and schools that interest them
- Develop an education plan based on their career interests
- Track all career preparation and planning activities
- Record career and life goals
- List the organizations, activities, and hobbies in which they participate
- Document work and volunteer experiences, as well as awards and recognitions they have received